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Report Highlights:

Healthy carbonated drinks, a new milk bar, staying home and food safety are trends in this month's issue.

Japan Food Trends (JFT) communicates Japanese food and lifestyle trends that may help U.S. exporters to generate product and marketing ideas.

Health

Calorie Zero Carbonated Beverages Gain Popularity

Nikkei POS, a market information service provided by Nikkei Shimbun digital media, conducted its 2009 first half new product sales ranking. According to the statistics for the beverages sector, healthy carbonated beverages appeared to get a boost in sales. Healthya Sparkling, launched by Kao ranked first. It is a carbonated drink that has a high level of catechin which helps burn fat. It is the first carbonated beverage to be licensed as a specified health food in FOSHU Japan. Products like Healthya Sparkling that help weight loss have traditionally been consumed by men in their thirties and forties. However, recent trends show that the twenty year old age group is consuming more Healthya products. The reason is that the twenty something group is becoming concerned about controlling their weight.



Mitsuya Cider All Zero, produced by Asahi beverage is not only zero calories, but also zero carbohydrate. It attracts consumers that are in their 20's to 40's. Carbonated drinks were perceived as high calorie beverages and causes weight gain. These Healthya Sparkling beverages are changing those perceptions.

From the Editor

The theme here is health. Statistics shows that many people are more concerned about their health than ever before. Non-calorie sparkling beverages allow consumers to enjoy a variety of drinks and stay healthy. Another healthy drink in the news is milk and, bars.

“How About Some Milk After Work?”, Shimbashi Keizai Shimbun, May 21, 2009

Just next to Karasumori gate at JR Shimbashi Train Station in Tokyo, where many Japanese salary men get together for drinks after a stressful day at work is where this unique “bar” is located.



The Milk Bar is a bar that provides various types of milk in a bar-like setting. They offer milk, fruit flavored milk and coffee flavored milk. There also is a Black Vinegar Bar that customers can enjoy. The bar is quite small. Only a few customers can fit in their tiny street corner bar, but it has a take out window. Nippon Restaurant Enterprise Co. Ltd opened Milk Bar in Shimbashi in May.

Recently, consumption of milk decreased due to its high prices. The Milk Bar was designed to encourage milk consumption through a completely unique and new venue.

The Milk Bar is supported by the Japan Dairy Industry Association.

From the Editor

The Milk Bar seems like a great way to encourage consumers who don't drink as much milk as they did in the past to take another look at milk. It was a great idea to put it in the middle of Tokyo. These days though, many people like to stay at home.

Home

Staying in is Popular, Kyodo News, July 21, 2009

More women in their 20's and 30's are choosing to spend their free time at home rather than going out to drink or to a movie. According to interviews conducted by Kyodo News on July 21, 2009, increasingly more women would prefer spending their money on things that they can use at home. Women are buying interior products and more and more mail order items such as cheesecakes to enjoy the comfort of their own home.



Gunze Ltd saw a 30% rise in its house wear brand “*Tuche*” over the first half of this year and has announced plans to extend the lines designs. Sales of cosmetic company, Kose Corps, “*Puredia Relax Head Spa*”, which is a skin care lotion for scalp that sells for around \$25 are way up. As far as foods and beverages go, many companies are beginning to make canned versions of peoples’ favorite bar cocktails. Suntory Liquors Ltd has canned its shochu (Japanese whiskey) and soda drinks. Women who drink at home tend to like low alcohol content. Suntory keeps its alcohol content level at 3%. Many women site limited budgets as one of the factors they stay home, but it appears that they are not limiting their budgets as much as changing what they spend it on.





From the Editor:

Being able to drink their favorite bar cocktails at home definitely suit the trend for women to stay in. Low carbonate, low fat, low carbohydrate, low everything is also one of the current food trends in Japan.

Food Labeling

Experts to Test Food Workers, Consumers on Labeling, The Daily Yomiuri, July 14, 2009,

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/20090714TDY03105.htm>



<http://www.sojitz.com/jp/news/2006/20060217.html>

According to experts, such as Miyagi University Prof. Shigenobu Ikedo, neither food producers nor consumers in Japan completely understand the food labeling system or use it correctly. This may be due to taking multiple ministries to regulate laws, which creates incompatible rules. To help expand the understanding of food labeling a certified examination was

established for producers, retailers and consumers.

The examination for intermediate level is offered for ¥8,000 and for beginners it is ¥3,800.

From the Editor

An examination on food labeling is important for labeling products correctly and for consumers to understand it correctly. Overall, it leads to consumer confidence.

Aeon to Start Growing its Own Vegetables, The Daily Yomiuri, July 24, 2009

Due to increased demand for food safety among its consumers, Supermarket chain Aeon, will begin growing low priced vegetables. Industry observers believe other companies may follow Aeon's lead.

In its first year, Aeon plans to grow about 300 tons of vegetables on borrowed land in Ibaraki prefecture and price these vegetables 20 to 30% lower than normal.



<http://www.km-farm.com/img/page1/ion1.jpg>

To demonstrate food safety, Aeon plans to increase transparency from production to retail.

Aeon is not the first Japanese food retailer to penetrate the farming business. Last August, Seven & I Holdings Co. started farming in Chiba Prefecture and plans to expand its operation as well.

